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Assessing the impact of European government funding for human rights NGOs in the  
context of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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The Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special  
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European governments, including the European Union, its member states, Norway and Switzerland, provide an estimated €100 million to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the Arab-Israeli conflict under the banner of human rights. This is a very large budget, and in many funding frameworks, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), constitutes over half of the total annual allocation for human rights and related issues throughout the Middle East.

These governmental allocations to NGOs in the area of human rights, and the highly disproportionate emphasis on the Arab-Israeli conflict, are closely linked to and have a direct impact on the agendas of international institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (UN-OCHA).

Furthermore, this government funding for human rights NGOs is in most cases, including the European Union, generally not subject to detailed evaluation by the European state institutions. The decision making processes by which the NGO funding, both direct and indirect, is allocated is a tightly kept secret, and freedom of information requests for protocols and evaluations have been repeatedly denied or answered with minimal cooperation.

In contrast, independent analysis presents substantial evidence that many of the NGO grantees lack the competence or capacity to implement the human-rights related projects for which they are funded, and their activities are counter-productive in terms of the promotion of universal human rights principles. Unless and until European governments end the secrecy regarding NGO funding and open up the process to professional and independent evaluation, the damage to human rights frameworks will continue to grow.